

**California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
Land Use, Agriculture and Housing Work Group
Strategic Action Proposal
September 2006**

I. Mission Statement

The mission of the Land Use, Agriculture and Housing Work Group is to support and promote regional consensus through the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint Plan process that identifies appropriate areas for social and economic development, contributing to the conservation of important agricultural land and natural resources, and to the sustainability of the region.

II. Background

A. Scope Adopted by Partnership

- Develop a macro-level concept plan for the San Joaquin Valley by bringing together stakeholders and existing efforts/resources to develop a strategy for integrating related parts of a complex system into a cohesive model for the region. (Great Valley Center will convene a series of workshops with interested groups and stakeholders to develop a plan for integration of local priorities, housing goals, land and natural resources GIS data such as the “Great Places” program and UPlan Model, and existing local General Plans.) Consider the fiscal implications for local government related to land use scenarios. Encourage and support a coordinated Regional Blueprint Plan application and program implementation.
- Develop principles, guidelines, and investment incentives for landowners, developers, and local governments to coordinate their actions on a regional basis.
- Identify legislative and regulatory issues, which if changed or amended, could lead to better, more consistent and predictable outcomes for communities, landowners and investors. (Resources Agency will provide an overview of legislative and regulatory issues.)
- Consider reorganization or consolidation strategies that would aid the region in greater cohesion and collaboration for large-scale regional issues.
- Provide the mechanism for greater availability and use of spatial data by state and local agencies, stakeholders and the public. (ICE at UC Davis and its partners will design a data base for CEQA documents to monitor and assess cumulative impacts of land use changes and development.)
- Ensure the coordination of regional and state agencies to provide the greatest level of efficiency and accomplishment.

B. Background: A Growing Population and Regional Identity

The population of the San Joaquin Valley has doubled every 30 years since 1900. Today, 3.3 million people -- more than 10% of California’s population -- live in an eight county region that contains large metropolitan cities and dozens of isolated rural communities. The Valley’s immense geographic size enabled the region’s population centers to grow independently of each

other separated by thousands of acres of productive agricultural land, while the fiscal structure and independence of local governments allowed most issues to be addressed on a local basis. Increasingly, however, the impact of population growth and the ease of transportation have highlighted the growing interrelationship of the Valley's communities.

The Recognition of Regional Opportunities Gains Momentum

At its creation in 1992, the San Joaquin Valley Air Quality Management District (SJVAQMD) was the first governmental agency to specifically address the Valley as one region. The case made for the creation of the district was that a single air basin demanded strategies that included all eight counties. Six years later, in 1998, the Great Valley Center began a series of conferences and studies that statistically documented and facilitated regional conversations on a number of economic, social and environmental issues. The early convenings led to the creation of the GVC Highway 99 Task Force, a public/private working group that brought together varied interests from across jurisdictional lines to promote the improvement of the Valley's main transportation corridor.

As the concept of region gained momentum, cities and counties began to understand their interdependence and connection on issues such as land use and housing, transportation, and economic development. Many collaborative discussions began between places like Fresno and Clovis, Bakersfield and Kern County, and Stanislaus County and its nine cities. Similarly, the Council of Government Directors for each of the 8 counties began to meet regularly to increase coordination between transportation planning agencies.

This activity received a critical boost with Governor Schwarzenegger's creation of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley in 2005. An effort to commit the state to coordinate and provide immediate response to the challenges facing the region, the Partnership's process has legitimized all levels of regional coordination and provided a platform from which a regional strategy could be developed.

C. Values

At its first meeting, the Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture Work Group identified the following 16 core values:

- Regional Coordination of and Consensus About Land Use and Transportation Plans
- Balance
- Sustainability
- Preserving Productive Agricultural Lands
- Conserving Natural Resources
- Healthy Environments
- Vibrant, Diversified Economies
- Adequate Housing for All Income Levels
- Effective Transportation
- Healthy Communities
- Clean Air and Water
- Accommodating Growth

- Adequate Funding
- Intergovernmental Collaboration
- Efficient Use of Land and Public Resources
- Incentives for Implementation

Values similar to those of the Partnership's Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture Work Group were also expressed in two sets of strategies for sustainable growth adopted by both the San Joaquin Valley Regional Association of California Counties and the Central California Mayors Conference over the course of the past year. (The following excerpt is consolidated from the similar statements adopted by each group at its own meeting.)

Principles for a Sustainable San Joaquin Valley

In order to preserve and enhance the region's quality of life, growth should be accommodated in ways that use the region's agricultural, natural and financial resources efficiently, enhance the region's economic competitiveness, and ensure more certain and adequate funding for local government.

- *New growth should be located in or adjacent to existing communities whenever possible.*
- *Land use planning and development solutions should be regionally coordinated and locally decided to encourage compact development and more efficient land use.*
- *The best locations for placement of higher densities that are most effectively integrated into region-wide transportation opportunities should be identified regionally.*
- *Premature or unnecessary conversion of prime or productive agricultural land should be avoided.*
- *Incentives that link funding of regional transportation improvements to land development should be provided.*
- *Policies to increase housing supply and affordability should be supported with policy and action.*
- *Regional strategies should be developed to ensure sufficient water supply and water quality.*
- *Regional infrastructure needs should be collaboratively planned and include funding strategies.*
- *A process which enables regular, ongoing conversations about issues of regional significance should be established and maintained.*

The San Joaquin Valley Regional Association of California Counties and the Central California Mayors Conference recognize that there are local conditions that may force exceptions but believe sustainable growth within the cities and counties of the San Joaquin Valley requires a shared vision supported by common goals and actions.

D. Overall Metrics

An opinion survey and/or focus groups of Valley residents should be conducted annually. The survey should measure public attitudes and levels of satisfaction with the progress being made towards achieving the goals for the region, identify areas of concern, and provide feedback on the regional strategy for policy makers and public leaders from both the public and private sectors.

Additionally, an indicator report, called the Regional Growth Report Card, should be developed and regularly published by the Great Valley Center as part of its “State of the Valley” series. This report will measure and report on progress towards the accomplishment of the goals set forth in this report, as well as those established in the Blueprint Project. The report will contain 20 to 24 specific measurements, such as the number of acres of farmland lost, the number of housing units built, community average densities, job growth, the number of days of non-attainment for air quality, number of acres of park land, etc. This data can be used to direct priorities and funding, and to provide guidance to policy makers and the private sector.

III. Goals and Objectives

A. Narrative

- 1. Goal 1: Develop a regional consensus on the guidelines, configuration, and strategy for development that accommodates population growth and economic development while minimizing the unnecessary loss of important farmland and ensuring the conservation and rehabilitation of important natural resources in the Valley. The development strategy also needs to reverse the proliferation of ranchettes in the Valley, which are an inefficient use of land and promote excessive exploitation of important agricultural land. The growth scenario will need to be reevaluated in 2015, 2025, and 2035 by a responsible entity to make sure it is accurately addressing population trends.**

a. Metrics

- The number of local governments that demonstrate commitment to Blueprint strategies by amending their local General Plans to incorporate consensus guidelines, policies, and recommendations.
- The number of acres, inclusion of under-represented natural communities and provision for corridors/linkages to ensure the health and sustainability of a regional landscape open space system. Also, the number of acres of parks, provision of a variety of recreational opportunities and access to significant natural and cultural sites.

b. Objectives

- **Objective A: Develop a regional plan with guidelines and strategies to achieve the desired shape and location of development in 2050 that adequately accommodates the region’s population and economic growth and preserves important farmland and natural resources.**
- **Objective B: Develop a high value parks and open space strategy to be used in the development of the Blueprint Plan with a goal of encouraging the creation and long term management (including restoration, as feasible) of a permanent open space system in the San Joaquin Valley that would include public and private lands and state, local and regional parks and conservancies and conservation easement areas (e.g. through participation of willing private landowners and voluntary participation of local, regional, state and federal agencies).**

2. **Goal 2: Promulgate and implement community design guidelines that will ensure strong neighborhoods, gain energy efficiency, reduce parking requirements, improve air quality and health by increasing walkability, reduce public expense for infrastructure, and improve community equity. By 2010, 75% of jurisdictions in the region should adopt these guidelines.**

a. Metrics

- Measure average density and type of housing development approvals annually by jurisdiction, and report in the Annual Regional Growth Report Card. Track and report on the number of jurisdictions reducing their parking area ratios to the recommended minimums. Measure the installation and use of solar energy producers in residential and commercial projects.
- Track parking area ratios required by local governments for new urban developments. Measure and report the use of design strategies to reduce runoff.
- Using the Regional Growth Report Card, measure and track the number of communities adopting green building standards and the number of units and public buildings built using them, the number of communities that have implemented flexible zoning codes to strengthen neighborhoods, and the number that provide non-motorized options for local travel.
- Measure and report on the number and location of non-contiguous developments and new towns approved after 2009 or other agreed-to date. (This would allow those already in the pipeline to be completed, but would prevent the proliferation of this kind of development in the future.)

b. Objectives

- **Objective A: Increase the overall density average of new development at least 15% in 75% of communities by 2010.**
- **Objective B: Reduce the land coverage of commercial and industrial parking areas by at least 20% by 2010. Increase the use of permeable surface paving, tree wells and other design strategies to reduce urban runoff.**
- **Objective C: Promote the adoption and implementation of zoning ordinances that are form based and more flexible to encourage desired outcomes.**
- **Objective D: Build New Cities in strategic locations, rather than many “new towns” opportunistically. Keep development contiguous to existing areas, except when part of the adopted regional strategy, and disallow freestanding new towns that aren’t of sufficient size (100,000 or more) to provide a range of services. This will both reduce short car trips to other urban areas for family business and work and reduce the edge conflicts between agricultural land and development, while maximizing the local effort to increase overall density averages.**

3. Goal 3: Identify regional infrastructure for the Valley and funding strategies to support its development.

a. Metrics

- The achievement of identified regional infrastructure paid for and coordinated through regional entities and resources. Track parking area ratios required by local governments for new urban developments. Measure and report the use of design strategies to reduce runoff.

b. Objectives

- **Objective A: Develop and implement a plan for the provision of regional infrastructure.**

4. Goal 4: Improve the planning and development process so that it supports regional coordination and provides incentives for smart growth. This can be facilitated by the adoption of a General Plan process that more accurately supports policy goals for the region and ensures regional coordination, and ensures the availability and use of complete, consistent and accurate GIS data and related information.

a. Metrics

- Number of local General Plans that use planning and resource data to adopt and incorporate new mitigation requirements; include an Agricultural and Open Space Element; use incentives to increase density; and coordinate general plan development with jurisdictions in the region.

b. Objectives

- **Objective A: Improve the sharing, access and use of planning and environmental resource data between state, regional, local governmental entities, private sector, environmental groups and the public for more informed decision-making.**

5. Goal 5: Develop a long-range strategy for agriculture that ensures its viability and sustainability. The plan will encourage the adoption and implementation of incentives that protect important agricultural land and lead to greater land efficiency, including encouraging local governments in the region to have an agriculture element in their General Plans. The plan will also consider the need of agricultural lands for access to reliable, affordable water and other resources necessary to maintain the productivity of those lands.

a. Metrics

- Accomplishment of the development and acceptance of a long range plan to maintain the viability of agriculture in the region.
- Annual measurement of the number of acres of parcel splits and ranchette approvals by county, paired with a calculation of the average size of ranchettes and the amount and quality of land converted by them.

- Annual review of the number of General Plan amendments in the region, and the net number of acres that would be removed from production by the amendment approval.

b. Objectives

- **Objective A: Develop a long range plan to maintain the viability of agriculture in the region, with the same attention and importance as an economic development plan, a county General Plan or a regional water plan.**
- **Objective B: Minimize the proliferation of ranchette development on important farmland in the San Joaquin Valley.**
- **Objective C: Reduce the loss of farmland attributable to General Plan amendments.**

6. Goal 6: Ensure safe, accessible, inclusive, and healthy communities that provide a variety of housing types affordable to Valley residents and working people, increasing opportunities for home ownership.

a. Metrics

- Number of local housing initiatives undertaken with local NGO participation, measured annually and reported in the Regional Growth Report Card.
- Number of affordable housing units built for working families, low and low to moderate income families, seniors and farmworkers. Number of regulatory incentives provided and number of units in each jurisdiction.

b. Objectives

- **Objective A: Increase the number and availability of housing units for people of all income levels of the region, especially working families.**
- **Objective B: Provide incentives for affordable housing that meets the needs of all income levels in the region.**

7. Goal 7: Identify the legislative and regulatory changes necessary to facilitate the implementation of the adopted goals and strategies.

a. Metrics

- Comparison of the average permitting time and cost to conceptualize and implement infill and refill projects in the test area, compared to those in other areas with unchanged regulations.
- The number of private property owners and government agencies who are satisfied with the approval of the development of open space conservation plans and systems in the region and the regulatory protections that accrue to those who make voluntary commitments.
- Number of General Plan updates completed and/or in progress in 2010.

- The number of jurisdictions adopting a new kind of fee structure, and the average density achievement of new development over time.

b. Objectives

- **Objective A:** Use the San Joaquin Valley as a model for testing new regulations to provide permitting and environmental review incentives that will facilitate infill and refill developments as a preferable alternative to "green field" developments.
- **Objective B:** Create a mechanism by which a regional high value, sustainable open space system can be established under a partnership with wildlife and regulatory agencies, so as not to subject the participating jurisdictions and landowners to penalties for proactive open space planning and conservation if and when new information is available.
- **Objective C:** Increase the coordination between local General Plans to facilitate better regional coordination and improved land use and transportation outcomes, by establishing a region-wide requirement for all General Plan updates within the region, beginning in 2009.
- **Objective D:** Establish the legal basis for assessing impact fees on a per acre basis rather than a per unit basis, so that per unit fees decrease as density increases. The more units built on an acre, the lower the fees; the higher the number of acres per unit, the higher the fees.

B. At-A-Glance Matrix

Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture				
Work Plan Actions				
Mission Statement				
<i>Develop a regional consensus that identifies appropriate areas for social and economic development, contributes to the conservation of important agricultural land and natural resources, and contributes to the sustainability of the region.</i>				
Goal 1: Develop a regional consensus on the guidelines, configuration, and strategy for development that accommodates population growth and economic development while minimizing the unnecessary loss of important farmland and ensuring the conservation and rehabilitation of important natural resources in the Valley.				
Indicators: Increase the number of local governments that demonstrate commitment to Blueprint strategies by amending their local General Plans to incorporate consensus guidelines, policies, and recommendations. Increase the number of acres, inclusion of under-represented natural communities and provision for corridors/linkages to ensure the health and sustainability of a regional landscape open space system. Increase the number of acres of parks, provision of a variety of recreational opportunities and access to significant natural and cultural sites. Equal number of acres in agricultural production. Increase in open space and access to public land. Increase in land use efficiency. Increase in the number of state parks.				
Objective A: Develop a regional plan with guidelines and strategies to achieve the desired shape and location of development in 2050 that adequately accommodates the region's population and economic development and preserves significant farmland and important natural resources.				
Identify policy goals and strategies to begin the eight county Blueprint process. Initiate the process with a Blueprint Summit to engage a wide array of individuals and interests in the process.	Working in each of the counties with policy makers, community members and stakeholders, and with a regional coordinating committee, develop and adopt a regional Blueprint Plan for land use and transportation, including consideration of water supply and quality, air quality, fiscal efficiency and social equity.	1. Seek funding for a regional programmatic Environmental Impact Report. 2. Cities and counties update General Plans to demonstrate consistency with regional strategy.	1. Development approvals become subject to the Blueprint strategies as expressed in adopted local General Plans and Ordinances. 2. Create Regional Congress of COGs to oversee implementation of regional strategy and provide feedback loop on General Plans (Consistency and implementation strategies could become the purview of regional financing mechanism)	<u>Immediate:</u> Blueprint Project, COGs, assisted by Great Valley Center <u>Short Term:</u> Blueprint Regional Coordinating Committee, 8 COG Policy Boards <u>Intermediate:</u> 1st action: Counties, Air Resources Board; 2nd action: 8 County Boards of Supervisors, 62 cities in the region, GVC could create plan template for others to adopt <u>Long Term:</u> City and county governments

Objective B: Develop a high value parks and open space strategy to be used in the development of the Blueprint Plan, with a goal of encouraging the creation and long term management (including restoration, as feasible) of a permanent open space system in the San Joaquin Valley that would include public and private lands and state, local and regional parks and conservancies and conservation easement areas (e.g. through participation of willing private landowners and voluntary participation of local, regional, state and federal agencies).				
Develop a consensus agreement on the proposed objectives and guidelines capable of achieving a high value open space, parks, and conservation system.	Identify and prioritize important natural resource areas for conservation, recreation and restoration purposes to inform the strategic planning process, provide mitigation opportunities, and reduce the potential for conflict.	Seek funding for a regional Environmental Impact Report, and identify a regional financing mechanism for conservation lands, open space and parks in the region.	Begin implementation of the Conservation, Parks and Open Space Plan involving the participation of cities, counties, COGs and landowners within the region. Funding eligibility based on consistency with adopted regional strategy, local General Plans, existing HCPs, mitigation contracts and existing protected areas.	<u>Immediate:</u> Partnership LUHA Conservation Sub-Committee, State and Federal natural resource agencies, stakeholders, local governments <u>Short Term:</u> Local governments, COGs, State and Federal natural resource agencies, conservation stakeholders <u>Intermediate:</u> COGs, Partnership, State & Federal natural resource agencies <u>Long Term:</u> State Parks, State and Federal natural resource agencies, regional & local land trusts, local governments, state and federal agencies

Goal 2: Promulgate and implement community design guidelines that will ensure strong neighborhoods, gain energy efficiency, reduce parking requirements, improve air quality and health by increasing walkability, reduce public expense for infrastructure and improve community equity.

Indicators: Increase average density and type of housing development approvals annually by jurisdiction, and report in the Annual Regional Growth Report Card. Increase the number of jurisdictions reducing their parking area ratios to the recommended minimums. Increase the installation and use of solar energy producers in residential and commercial projects. Increase the use of design strategies to reduce runoff. Increase the number of communities adopting green building standards and the number of units and public buildings built using them, the number of communities that have implemented flexible zoning codes to strengthen neighborhoods, and the number that provide non-motorized options for local travel. Decrease the number and location of non-contiguous developments and new towns approved after 2009 or other agreed-to date. (This would allow those already in the pipeline to be completed, but would prevent the proliferation of this kind of development in the future.)

Objective A: Increase the overall density average of new development at least 15% in 75% of communities by 2010.

Working through the COGs, conduct public discussions of how to define density and concentrated development; provide pictures of options and opportunities at public workshops; identify local barriers to multi family housing and other concentrated housing options. Include discussions of how to build strong neighborhoods, and how to promote schools, parks and other public facilities as centers of neighborhoods and community.	1. Facilitate the development of regional outreach and education that promotes the benefits of new housing options for all, including higher density, mixed use, renewable energy for housing and industry and walkability. 2. Establish formula and relationship between jobs created and housing units built; working with ABAG and SCAG, develop alternative scenarios for population projections and housing requirements in the San Joaquin Valley and in coastal areas based on the relationship. Consider alternative growth projections or affirm existing ones.	Through the Blueprint planning process, adopt local density guidelines that increase density averages at least 15% by 2010. Re-evaluate community sphere of influence requirements with greater density goals. Make changes as necessary. Establish goals for solar installation in housing developments.	Re-evaluate implementation strategies against performance and consider further modifications, i.e., increases in density, higher goals for renewable energy use, etc. (NOTE: Performance and standards should be monitored and re-evaluated at least every 10 years, and appropriate adjustments made at that time.)	<u>Immediate:</u> COGs/Blueprint local workshops, ACI Core Group with COGs <u>Short Term:</u> 1st action: ACI Core Group with COGs; 2nd action: COG Directors <u>Intermediate:</u> COGs, Blueprint Regional Council, local governments <u>Long Term:</u> COGs' Regional Coordinating Council, local governments, developers, stakeholders
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Objective B: Reduce the land coverage of commercial and industrial parking areas by at least 20% by 2010. Increase the use of permeable surface paving, tree wells, and other design strategies to reduce urban runoff.				
Develop minimum and maximum parking area ratios for commercial properties, retail malls, and “big box” development.	1. Cities and counties consider adopting new parking standards and requirements that reduce hard surface coverage; encourage multi-story parking facilities to increase parking availability and reduce land consumption; consider permitting uses that can “share” parking (e.g. churches near shopping malls, theaters near offices, etc.). 2. Adopt design standards to reduce urban runoff.	1. Land coverage for commercial development decreases by 20% as measured by the ratio of square feet of commercial and industrial uses to dedicated parking areas as the adopted standards are implemented. 2. New developments begin to show design strategy implementation.	Decreased parking requirements as transportation alternatives and urban walkability increase.	<u>Immediate:</u> GVC, Commercial Properties Association (CPA), American Planning Association (APA) <u>Short Term:</u> 1st action: Cities, Counties, American Farmland Trust (AFT), CPA; 2nd action: Cities, counties, State Water Quality Control Board <u>Intermediate:</u> 1st action: Cities, counties; 2nd action: Builders, developers <u>Long Term:</u> COGs' Regional Coordinating Committee, cities, counties
Objective C: Promote the adoption and implementation of zoning ordinances that are form based and more flexible to encourage desired outcomes.				
Disseminate information on the advantages to more flexible zoning codes, including form based zoning.	Develop and disseminate model ordinances that provide greater zoning flexibility in order to reduce reliance on the auto (and thus improve air quality), increase “green building” and the use of renewable energy, increase walkability, and reduce parking requirements.	Working with the COGs through the Blueprint process, encourage the adoption of more flexible zoning codes and local ordinances to achieve the goals of healthy neighborhoods, reduced land consumption, greater efficiency, and improved air quality in the region. Provide feedback on local general plans.	Re-evaluate implementation strategies against performance and consider further modifications, i.e., increases in density, higher goals for renewable energy use, etc. (NOTE: Performance and standards should be monitored and re-evaluated at least every 10 years, and appropriate adjustments made at that time.)	<u>Immediate:</u> GVC, APA <u>Short Term:</u> APA, SJVAQMD, EPA, GOPR, CPA <u>Intermediate:</u> GVC, COGs, local governments <u>Long Term:</u> COGs' coordinating council, local governments, stakeholders

Objective D: Build New Cities in strategic locations, rather than many “new towns” opportunistically. Keep development contiguous to existing areas, except when part of the adopted regional strategy, and disallow freestanding new towns that aren’t of sufficient size (100,000 or more) to provide a range of services. This will both reduce short car trips to other urban areas for family business and work, and reduce the edge conflicts between agricultural land and development, while maximizing the local effort to increase overall density averages.

Present research and data on the “optimal” minimum size for communities at Blueprint Workshops for local governments and developers. Facilitate discussions on New Towns versus New Cities through the Blueprint process and at regional conferences and meetings of the Supervisors Association, the League of Cities, the Planning Commissioners workshops, LAFCO meetings and the Great Valley Center Conference.	Use the Blueprint planning process to develop policy guidelines for New Cities and their location(s), considering existing development, gateway links to other areas, the impacts to agricultural viability and natural resources, the potential availability of water, and access to transit and other transportation infrastructure.	Set a date certain to end approvals of new towns that don’t offer a full range of housing types and commercial and industrial space, as well as a plan for sufficient services to support the community. Provide feedback on local General Plans.	Concentrate and focus development into urban areas that are or will soon grow to be full service communities of at least 100,000 or more. Develop a plan for adequate infrastructure and resources for the New Cities.	<u>Immediate:</u> GVC, UC Berkeley School of Urban and Regional Planning, LAFCO, LCC, CSAC <u>Short Term:</u> COGs, regional coordinating committee <u>Intermediate:</u> Blueprint Plan, COGs' Coordinating Committee, local governments <u>Long Term:</u> Cities and counties
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Goal 3: Identify regional infrastructure for the Valley and identify funding strategies to support its development.				
Indicator: Increase in funds from regional entities and resources for regional infrastructure.				
Objective A: Develop and implement a plan for the provision of regional infrastructure.				
Working with local governments, stakeholders and community members, reach consensus on the definition and identification of regional infrastructure.	Evaluate potential mechanisms for financing regional infrastructure, the collection and disbursal of fees for regional projects, and for transportation and other options as may be desirable.	Establish financing plan for regional infrastructure. Establish criteria for funding eligibility, including consistency with adopted regional strategy.	Prioritize and implement regional infrastructure plan.	<u>Immediate:</u> COG Directors, policy boards, Blueprint Coordinating Committee, GVC <u>Short Term:</u> COG directors & planners, local governments, state agencies <u>Intermediate:</u> Local governments, public agencies, or JPAs (TBD) <u>Long Term:</u> Responsible agency/ies or authority (TBD)
Goal 4: Improve the planning and development process so that it supports regional coordination and provides incentives for smart growth.				
Indicators: Increase the number of local General Plans that adopt and incorporate new mitigation requirements, include an Agricultural and Open Space Element, and include incentives to increase density. Increase in coordination of general plan development with jurisdictions in the region.				
Objective A: Improve the sharing, access and use of planning and environmental resource data between state, regional, local governmental entities, private sector, environmental groups and the public for more informed decision-making.				
1. Identify data and information gaps, the custodian of the data if available, and the data and information that is needed but not yet available or digitized. 2. Develop a temporary portal through CERES to ensure simple, open access to regional data.	1. Identify cooperating and responsible agencies and required funding to begin data collection. 2. Identify a regional entity responsible for regional data aggregation and a permanent regional portal, sharing data with CERES.	Continue updating and making available regional data.	Continue updating and making available regional data	<u>Immediate:</u> Resources Agency, BT&H, CalEPA, ICE at UC Davis, COG Technology Information Work Group <u>Short Term:</u> 1st action: Resources Agency, BT&H, CalEPA and appropriate regional and federal entities; 2nd action: Resources Agency, regional data coordinating entity <u>Intermediate and Long Term:</u> Resources Agency, BT&H, CalEPA, regional entities

Goal 5: Develop a long-range strategy for agriculture that ensures its viability and sustainability. Indicators: Accomplishment of the development and acceptance of a long range plan to maintain the viability of agriculture in the region.				
Objective A: Develop a long range plan to maintain the viability of agriculture in the region, with the same attention and importance as an economic development plan, a county General Plan or a regional water plan.				
The Secretary for the California Department of Food and Agriculture should work with stakeholders and others in the agricultural sector and develop a long range plan for agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley.	The California Agricultural Plan should be used to focus and inform the discussion of water, land use and agriculture in the region, ensuring balanced and valuable input from the industry and other stakeholders in the region.	Local and State Governments consider the needs of agriculture as expressed in the California Ag Plan. The needs of agriculture will be given appropriate weight and consideration as the region plans and implements its growth and (economic) development future.	Agriculture remains an important, major part of the character and economy of the region.	<u>Immediate:</u> Secretary for CDFA <u>Short Term:</u> Regional stakeholders, landowners, county Farm Bureaus, Blueprint Coordinating Committee, county governments, Resources Agency <u>Intermediate:</u> Blueprint Plan, cities, counties
Objective B: Minimize the proliferation of ranchette development on important farmland in the San Joaquin Valley.				
Determine the number of acres and individual ranchettes currently entitled or awaiting approval in each county. Limit new approvals of ranchettes during the process of policy development.	Through the Blueprint planning process, consider a policy of no ranchette approvals or rural residential development on important farmland and other working lands and open space, unless significant mitigation fees or the purchase of development rights are negotiated to offset the impact	Ensure that the Agriculture and Open Space Element of each County General Plan identifies important agricultural lands, (based on soils, availability and cost of water, and other relevant factors), and the critical mass of land holdings to ensure the long term viability of agriculture in the area; strategies to avoid the premature urbanization of land, and policies appropriate to mitigate the impacts to agricultural production in the region. Counties should increase the minimum parcel size in agricultural areas to at least 40 acres for crop land and 160 acres for grazing land.	Every county should develop a sliding scale agricultural mitigation program that bases mitigation requirements on the soil productivity and distance from existing services. High ratios would be required for conversion of highly productive soils and those remote from existing services (e.g. Developments remote from county services or on prime soils would have the highest mitigation requirements Developments closer to existing urban development or on less productive soils would pay a lower fee.)	<u>Immediate:</u> GVC, local governments, AFT, State Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program (DOC FMMP), local and regional land trusts <u>Short Term:</u> Blueprint Coordinating Committee, COG boards, AFT, counties <u>Intermediate:</u> AFT, county governments, county Farm Bureaus, local land trusts <u>Long Term:</u> County governments

Objective C: Reduce the loss of farmland attributable to General Plan amendments.

Develop a standardized spatial map of all General Plans in the region, using uniform land classifications, and establish an integrated General Plan system.	1. Evaluate and recommend appropriate strategies, including a policy of "no net loss" of farmland attributable to locally approved amendments once the jurisdiction's General Plan is approved. 2. Develop baseline data on the number of General Plan amendments annually in the region, and the cumulative impact on productive agricultural land.	Local governments adopt recommended strategies.	Reduce the number of small rural developments that have no services or have high costs for the provision of services. Small rural communities should receive new investments to increase the population to a size that would justify minimum services – clean water, a grocery store, school, bus stop, reduce short car trips and ensure that residents have access to a reasonable quality of life. Residents in unsustainable or unhealthy rural communities should be given priority for housing in communities where services and support systems are available.	<u>Immediate:</u> ICE at UC Davis, DOC FMMP, Blueprint GIS Task Force <u>Short Term:</u> 1st action: Blueprint Coordinating Committee, county Farm Bureaus, city and county Policy Boards, AFT, local land trusts 2nd action: ICE, DOC FMMP, Blueprint GIS Task Force <u>Intermediate:</u> City and county governments, Blueprint Coordinating Committee provides feedback loop on General Plans and Amendments. <u>Long Term:</u> County governments, CRLA, ACI Core Group with COGs, county Farm Bureaus, local housing assistance corporations
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Goal 6: Ensure safe, accessible, inclusive, and healthy communities that provide a variety of housing types affordable to Valley residents and working people, increasing opportunities for home ownership.				
Indicators: Increase in the number of local housing initiatives undertaken with local NGO participation. Increase in the number of affordable housing units build for working families, low and low to moderate income families, seniors and farmworkers. Increase in the number of regulatory incentives provided and number of units in each jurisdiction.				
Objective A: Increase the number and availability of housing units for people of all income levels of the region, especially working families.				
Improve access and coordination for local residents and volunteers to participate in, support, and advocate for community based housing initiatives.	1. Establish a regional housing trust fund for affordable housing. 2. Facilitate the development of a regional outreach/education campaign that promotes the benefits of higher density, mixed use, public transit oriented communities.	1. Implement and administer the housing trust fund to facilitate the provision of workforce housing in the region. 2. Collaborate with master planned community developers to ensure a mix of housing types for all income levels.	Establish local housing resource centers to provide housing information and assistance to both the users and the providers of affordable housing in every county.	<u>Immediate:</u> ACI Core Group with COGs, local housing authorities, Habitat for Humanity <u>Short Term:</u> 1st action: Governor, state and federal legislators, ACI Core Group with COGs; 2nd action: ACI Core Group with COGs <u>Intermediate:</u> 1st action: Trust Fund Governing Board, community based housing agencies, developers, local governments; 2nd action: Local governments, COGs, local housing authorities, NGOs, advocates <u>Long Term:</u> Counties, Housing Trust Fund, HCD, HUD
Objective B: Provide incentives for affordable housing that meets the needs of all income levels in the region.				
	Improve access and coordination for local residents and volunteers to participate in, support, and advocate for community based housing initiatives.	Identify and reform regulatory barriers to affordable housing. Identify and highlight incentives. (See “Putting the Pieces Together”, a report on smart growth from the Urban Land Institute)	Create employee assistance programs and education in financial literacy to aid families in achieving home ownership.	<u>Short Term:</u> ACI Core Group with COGs, local housing authorities, Habitat for Humanity <u>Intermediate:</u> Local governments, HUD, HCD, state legislature, builders, developers <u>Long Term:</u> Banks and credit unions, Chambers of Commerce and business councils, housing advocates, community based housing corporations

Goal 7: Identify legislative and regulatory changes necessary to facilitate the implementation of the adopted goals and strategies.				
Indicators: Decrease in the average permitting time and cost to conceptualize and implement infill and refill projects in the test area, compared to those in other areas with unchanged regulations. Increase in the number of private property owners and government agencies who are satisfied with the approval of the development of open space conservation plans and systems in the region and the regulatory protections that accrue to those who make voluntary commitments. Increase in the number of General Plan updates completed and/or in progress in 2010. Increase in the number of jurisdictions adopting a new kind of fee structure, and the average density achievement of new development over time.				
Objective A: Use the San Joaquin Valley as a model for testing new regulations to provide permitting and environmental review incentives that will facilitate infill and refill developments as a preferable alternative to "green field" developments.				
Working with the Resources Agency, form a new CEQA Reform working group in order to develop specific guidelines and approval processes to allow local agency approval of infill and refill developments with expedited and proscribed environmental review to address specific and appropriate issues.	Public review of proposed test, and limited approval by Resources Agency.	Implement and monitor approved CEQA model test processes.	Monitor, review, evaluate and make recommendations for the adoption, modification or termination of the test case.	<u>Immediate:</u> Resources Agency, COGs, residential and commercial developers, redevelopment agencies <u>Short Term:</u> Secretary for Resources Agency, Secretary for Cal EPA <u>Intermediate:</u> Cities, counties, redevelopment agencies in the test area <u>Long Term:</u> Cities, counties, Secretary for Resources Agency, state legislature
Objective B: Create a mechanism by which a regional high value, sustainable open space system can be established under a partnership with wildlife and regulatory agencies, so as not to subject the participating jurisdictions and landowners to penalties for proactive open space planning and conservation if and when new information is available.				
Secretary of Resources to create a San Joaquin Valley Coordinating Council composed of State and Federal wildlife and conservation agencies, stakeholder groups and interested parties to begin discussions of a comprehensive high value open space conservation system, and what kind of safe harbor or other protections might be available to participants.	Test the proposed strategies with land owners and local governments throughout the region.	Seek legislation or regulatory authority to implement proposed strategies and mechanisms.	Begin the implementation of high value resource conservation strategies, in partnership with agencies, land owners and local governments. Monitor and adjust as necessary.	<u>Immediate:</u> CA Secretary for Resources <u>Short Term:</u> COGs, large property owners, wildlife agencies, Resource Conservation Districts, watershed organizations, fire-safe councils, and San Joaquin Valley Coordinating Council <u>Intermediate:</u> Resources Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service <u>Long Term:</u> Landowners, wildlife agencies, local governments, Resource Conservation Districts, watershed organizations, fire-safe councils.

Objective C: Increase the coordination between local General Plans to facilitate better regional coordination and improved land use and transportation outcomes, by establishing a region-wide requirement for all General Plan updates within the region, beginning in 2009.

Consider legislation to establish a uniform General Plan update schedule for the Blueprint Planning area to begin in 2009, or a voluntary adoption of the schedule by cities and counties. (NOTE: This could constitute a new State mandate, and will have to be evaluated accordingly.)	1. Draft and support legislative change to General Plan laws. 2. Develop model ordinances and General Plan principles and policies. 3. Organize participants, discussions about regional structure and oversight.	1. Local governments begin implementation of General Plan planning process, coordinated across the region and consistent with the adopted Blueprint Strategy. 2. By early 2008, a specific recommendation should be developed by local government COGs and other stakeholders for an appropriate regional structure and its implementation.	Adoption and implementation of regionally coordinated local General Plans	<u>Immediate:</u> GOPR, BT&H <u>Short Term:</u> 1st action: BT&H, Resources Agency; 2nd action: Cities, counties, professional technical experts; 3rd action: Cities, counties, COGs, stakeholders <u>Intermediate:</u> 1st action: City and county planners, policy makers, communities; 2nd action: Cities, counties, COGs, stakeholders <u>Long Term:</u> Cities, counties, COGs
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Objective D: Establish the legal basis for assessing impact fees on a per acre basis rather than a per unit basis, so that per unit fees decrease as density increases. The more units built on an acre, the lower the fees; the higher the number of acres per unit, the higher the fees.

Research the legal basis for the nexus of fees under the new policy assumptions.	Legislation will be proposed depending on the success of the legal research.			<u>Immediate:</u> GOPR, HCD, legal scholars, stakeholders <u>Short Term:</u> GOPR, BT&H, HCD
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IV. Resources for Implementation

A. Existing Resources

A significant body of information, design guidelines, reports and documentation already exists to support the deliberations of communities, residents and their local governments as they ponder the future of the region's development standards and growth strategies. Many of those resources are listed in the Resource Documents, available in the full report.

The Great Valley Center has a well established Indicator series called *The State of the Great Central Valley* that has already established some of the necessary baseline data and can be structured to measure progress in the region going forward. The Public Policy Institute of California conducts frequent public opinion polling in the region that can be used to track public opinion.

Small grants were raised to provide the professional expertise of a resource conservation consultant to assist in the development of the conservation strategy for the region; the effort was supported by Resource Agency contracts with the Information Center for the Environment at UC Davis.

The Cities and Counties, through their own professional associations, have begun to express a willingness to look at the issues of growth and transportation regionally, as demonstrated in their recently adopted "Principles for a Sustainable San Joaquin Valley." This indicates a new opportunity to work together differently.

The Universities of the area are expressing a strong interest in regional issues, with a new Center for the Study of Regional Change at UC Davis, and the Information Center for the Environment also at UC Davis, that is providing GIS data and mapping assistance to support the land use, land conservation and planning efforts of the Work Group, the Center for Water and Irrigation Technology at CSU Fresno, the economic forecasting efforts of the University of the Pacific and the solar research concentration at UC Merced. There are research opportunities in conjunction with those institutions as well as the opportunity to engage students, Fellows and others in research, project development and metrics.

The eight county COGs in the San Joaquin Valley have jointly applied for and received a \$2M grant from Cal Trans, with some additional funding from the SJVAQMD for the purpose of beginning coordinated land use and transportation for the region. This project will focus the integrated dialogue around issues related to growth, land use, resource conservation, air quality, water and infrastructure on a scale that is unprecedented in the region and in the entire State.

The Governor and the Legislature have provided \$5M to the San Joaquin Partnership for the ongoing costs of administration and implementation of the recommendations of the Partnership.

B. Additional Resources

The data and information necessary for planning and environmental conservation is spotty and inconsistent. The region needs better (access to) shared data that is currently in the control of both public and private agencies, especially the state and federal governments.

The outreach and education program that is necessary to fully engage the public over an eight county area is not funded. When the SaCOG did their Blueprint project, more than \$600,000 went into supporting community groups and neighborhood participation, not including the publications, videos and other mass media that was part of the outreach strategy. Those resources are not currently available, though partnership with the SJVAQMD and others will be sought (the challenge of outreach in this area is particularly difficult as there is no regional media, and so it is necessary to communicate with multiple media outlets at the same time, and when the ethnic media is included, the complexity is multiplied).

There is no existing regional structure. All regional conversations are voluntary, and are easy to ignore if the issues become too onerous. While the Governor's attention and resources have brought everyone to the table, keeping them there will be more difficult as priorities and personnel shift. In order to make a regional strategy meaningful, there has to be some sort of regional entity. That entity could come from the formal consolidation of the COGs (already proposed legislatively but wildly unpopular); it could be a Joint Powers Authority or some other new legislatively created structure that could both oversee the regional growth strategy over time and be the vehicle for the distribution of funds for regional infrastructure or funds for infrastructure or projects in the region (e.g. the \$2.5M re-granting money available through the Governor's budget).

Staff support, community organization and participation, and coordination have come to the Partnership and the Work Groups on a pro bono basis. The level of re-directed energy and commitment to the effort cannot continue without support for dedicated staff time and professional support.

The Land Use, Housing and Agriculture Work Group recommendations, along with the Transportation Work Group recommendations will pass to the Blueprint process, under the oversight of the eight county Councils of Government. Coordination with several of the work groups from the Partnership will continue, although most of the implementation of land use and transportation planning will take place through the Partnership.

V. Status Report

- The Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture Work Group has developed three alternative long range growth scenarios to present to the eight county COGs. The scenarios are:
 - New Cities: New cities, with populations of 100,000 to 200,000 or more, could be built in the gateways between coastal economic centers and Valley housing areas (at the western edge of San Joaquin County, in the area of the Altamont Pass, in the area of Pacheco Pass and Los Banos, and in the Tehachapis between Bakersfield and Los Angeles). These developments would minimize commute times, reduce air pollution

resulting from commuting into and across the Valley, and reduce the unnecessary development of agricultural lands on the Valley floor. Infrastructure, roads, water, etc. would have to be planned and built to serve populations large enough for these developments to be self-sufficient.

- **Great Cities:** The Great Cities model envisions large metropolitan areas along Highway 99, with 1.5 million or more living in the Stockton/ Modesto/Merced area, 1.5 million or more in the Fresno/Clovis area, and 1 million or more in the Bakersfield metropolitan area. At these sizes, the cities become “great” cities, with financial centers, transit systems, downtowns, parks, and cultural and sports facilities, and they are large enough to attract and sustain economic centers. While this strategy does continue building on important farm land, it reduces the amount of edges that would occur with many smaller cities and therefore reduces the potential for conflict. The cost of new infrastructure is minimized because of the concentration of development. Large cities offer a variety of neighborhoods, housing types, and living choices and provide maximum leverage to existing investments, while more easily accommodating higher average densities.
- **Connected Cities:** Connected Cities builds on the Great Cities model, and then assumes narrow, medium-density transit corridors that connect transit oriented developments (TODs) and provide connections between New Cities and coastal centers. This model recognizes the necessity of east-west connections, and establishes sufficient concentrations of development to support a variety of transportation types between the Great Cities of the Valley and those of the California Coast.

Establishing clear policies to keep neighborhoods strong and protect the edges of cities in order to avoid sprawl is essential to the success of any growth scenario.

- Great Valley Center has convened more than a dozen meetings, with a combined total of over 125 participants, with the purpose of developing a plan for integration of local priorities, housing goals, land and natural resources GIS data, and existing local General Plans. The attendees of these meetings represent a wide variety of interests; they include environmental groups, agricultural interests, citizen stakeholders, planners, and developers.

Under the designation of the San Joaquin Valley Affordable Communities Initiative, HUD has convened over a dozen meetings with over two hundred attendees in order to develop a regional strategy for housing. The stakeholders that attended these meetings include builders, developers, lenders, realtors, employers, building trade union members, homebuyers, environmentalists, housing counselors, jurisdiction housing planners, housing authority officials, and housing advocates from congregations, neighborhood associations, and legal service organizations.

Additionally, two meetings were conducted by a consultant to the Great Valley Center regarding the identification of high value open space and conservation opportunities. Over a dozen people attended these meetings, and they represent environmental interests.

- A grant to initiate an eight county Regional Blueprint Planning Process was funded by CalTrans in December 2005. A Blueprint Summit was held in Fresno on June 28, 2006 with approximately 650 attendees from around the region. Work on the Blueprint is in progress

and will continue for the next 18 to 24 months. The report from the Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture Work Group will be passed to the Blueprint Coordinators in November 2006.

- The Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture Work Group has developed a set of community design guidelines and recommended policies that will be considered during the Blueprint Process.
- The Land Use, Housing and Agriculture Work Group has developed recommendations to reduce the rate and amount of farmland urbanization.
- The Land Use, Housing, and Agriculture Work Group has identified the legislative and regulatory changes necessary to facilitate the adoption of its goals and strategies.
- The eight county COGs have formed a GIS data coordinating committee with the purpose of making consistent GIS data widely available. A database of GIS information will be created for public consumption, but what institution will be responsible for being the main portal for the database has yet to be decided.
- The eight county Councils of Governments are working to identify regional infrastructure, but have not yet been able to reach a consensus. These conversations will continue as the Blueprint process proceeds.

VI. Conclusion

The goals and strategies for the Land Use Housing and Ag Work Group for the California Partnership with the San Joaquin Valley are presented as recommendation, to be endorsed by the Members of the Partnership Board, and then passed to the cities and counties of the region through the Blueprint Planning Process.

The Blueprint, different from the other goals and implementation strategies of the Partnership, envisions a plan for 2050. The policies and implementation actions will be taken incrementally, by communities throughout the region, in order to create and build a region that supports healthy and diverse urban centers, economic activity for the 21st century, vital and sustainable agriculture and open space systems that ensure the conservation and restoration of the Valley's best natural resources.

It is a big vision, but the opportunity has never been greater. Future generations will look at those of us who own this moment and measure us according to the legacy we impart.

Thanks and appreciation are due to the hundreds of people who have participated in land use, natural resources, and housing committee work.

Special thanks for coordination and leadership of committee work go to the following individuals:

Con Howe, Urban Land Institute

Julia Lave Johnston, Governor's Office of Planning and Research

Mike McCoy, Information Center for the Environment, UC Davis
Rod Meade, R.J. Meade Consulting
George Osner, G. Osner Consulting
Rollie Smith, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Luree Stetson, Department of Conservation
Ed Thompson, American Farmland Trust

VII. Attachments

- A. Identifying High Value Open Space and Conservation Opportunities in the San Joaquin Valley**
- B. San Joaquin Valley Affordable Communities Initiative**

Attachment A: Identifying High Value Open Space and Conservation Opportunities in the San Joaquin Valley

Prepared by R. J. Meade, Consultant and Mike McCoy, Information Center for the Environment

The Draft Blueprint Plan addresses approaches for protecting high value open space within the rapidly growing San Joaquin Valley. More than 4 million new residents are expected to live in the San Joaquin Valley by 2050. Planning for protection of high value open space comes at a particularly critical time. As noted in the draft California Wildlife Action Plan (DFG, 2006), since the arrival of Europeans, the acreage and geographical extent of the major natural communities have been reduced by between 67 percent and 99 percent when compared to their pre-European ranges. The shrinking quantity and quality of natural lands reflect the effects of expanding irrigated agriculture, increasing population and urbanization, and the increasing diversions of river flows and other limited water resources. The 4 million new residents will consume natural resources at an increasing rate in response to demands generated by:

- expansion of existing urban areas and potential urbanization in new areas;
- potentially accelerated development of “ranchettes” in rural areas (Note: these ranchettes range in size from 5 to 20 acres and now account for about 30 percent of “developed” acreage for non-agricultural lands in the study area); and
- diversions of river and ground water for Valley urban and agriculture and for export to southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area.

In response to these challenges, the Regional Association of Counties and the Mayors Conference for the San Joaquin Valley have approved strategies to address future growth and quality of life issues. The County Supervisors and Mayors declared, as a part of the approved strategies, that:

In order to preserve and enhance the region's quality of life, growth should be accommodated in ways that use the region's agricultural, natural and financial resources efficiently, enhance the region's economic competitiveness, and ensure more certain and adequate funding for local development.

The Draft Blueprint Plan for the San Joaquin Valley will rely on broad governmental, agency and public support to achieve its objectives and implement recommended guidelines. These objectives and guidelines are intended to provide assistance to local government, public agencies, landowners and other decision-makers that will participate in the Partnership. Specifically, the proposed objectives and guidelines are intended to assist decision makers decide: (1) where new development capable of accommodating 4 million new residents should be located; and (2) which existing open space areas would offer the best opportunities for preserving and managing connected, high value natural, recreational and cultural resources.

In recognition of the voluntary and collaborative nature of the San Joaquin Valley Partnership and the Blueprint Plan, the objectives and guidelines set forth in this section should not be interpreted as binding policies or *de facto* regulatory standards. However, a desired outcome of the Blueprint process clearly would be that local governments, planning and regulatory agencies, landowners and other organizations within the Partnership area would consider adopting the proposed objectives and guidelines set forth in this section that are most relevant to their areas as part of their respective planning, implementation and funding programs.

a. OVERVIEW

The San Joaquin Valley study area is a geographically and biologically diverse setting containing a wide range of natural and recreational resources. Historically, the broad valley floor was well connected to the foothills and mountains on the east, south and west margins of the valley by riparian and other natural community linkages. These connections facilitated wildlife movement and assured that valley natural resources dependent on the snow melt from surrounding upper elevations were well watered and healthy. In its pre-European condition, the valley and surrounding foothills and mountains constituted a well functioning, diverse and “sustainable” ecosystem.

The primary goal of this section of the Draft Blueprint is to identify high value open space and conservation opportunities to contribute to re-establishing a “sustainable landscape” that: (1) protects and, where feasible, restores biological resources, natural processes and recreational/cultural resources; (2) provides for management of these protected resources as part of a coordinated open space system serving the entire study area; (3) contributes to a sustainable quality of life for present and future residents; and (4) accommodates anticipated growth and provides for needed economic development. Achieving this goal will require a systematic approach involving coordination of the open space/conservation opportunities strategy with other components of the Draft Blueprint strategy (*e.g.*, strategies for agricultural lands protection and locating and designing new development)..

At a minimum, for the high value open space strategy to effectively contribute to re-establishing a sustainable landscape, it should encourage creation and long-term management of a permanent open space system that includes:

- landscape-level open space on the Valley floor that would include remaining riparian areas, portions of ancestral lakes and representative elements of under-protected natural communities identified by the Department of Parks and Recreation in their “Acquisition Guidelines for Natural Areas” and “Central Valley Vision” reports, and the Department of Fish and Game in their California Wildlife Action Plan;
- selected portions of “rim” areas located between the Valley floor and higher elevations (threatened and under-represented vegetation communities and species concentrations);
- selected natural corridor connections (*e.g.*, riparian corridors) linking the Valley floor with surrounding higher elevation rim areas; and

- designated agricultural lands and water management practices that are capable of contributing to long-term maintenance and management of biologically-sensitive resources and can be incorporated into planning and implementing an open space system for the overall study area.

Protection of a system of sensitive land and water resources will require a coordinated approach that will include:

- selective fee acquisition of properties;
- acquisition of conservation easements for biological, open space, agricultural and water management purposes;
- incorporating compatible agricultural lands that provide significant opportunities for wildlife habitat and connectivity benefits that would contribute to conservation on a regional level;
- future protection of water supplies adequate to maintain the functions and values existing habitat or the functions and values of proposed restored habitat;
- integrating fuel-management, flood control, water supply and quality and other actions being implemented on a landscape level that affect sensitive resources;
- identifying and involving organizations and agencies with the expertise and financial means to manage protected lands; and
- identifying sources of funding sufficient to assure that designated open space lands can be protected and managed over the long term.

b. PROPOSED HIGH VALUE OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal of the Blueprint Plan is to contribute to re-establishing a sustainable landscape with the 8-county study area. In coordination with other Blueprint strategy components, biologically-sensitive land and waters, recreational lands and other open space would be identified and considered for protection to provide a foundation for re-establishing a “sustainable landscape.” This overarching goal would be achieved by addressing the following supporting objectives within the Blueprint study area:

Objective 1: Coordinate the creation of a coordinated open space system that would include public ownerships, conservancies and conservation easements to contribute to continuing biological diversity within the study area and to enhancing the quality of life for all San Joaquin Valley residents and visitors.

- Objective 2: Maintain ecosystem biological diversity by identifying and protecting significant wetlands and riparian resources and other natural communities providing habitat that supports at-risk species.
- Objective 3: Protect the public and property/infrastructure (including levees) by identifying and protecting open space buffers separating sensitive natural lands and agricultural lands from existing and future urban uses.
- Objective 4: Identify and protect degraded aquatic and upland natural communities that could provide suitable mitigation for impacts associated with economic development consistent with overall Blueprint Plan goals within San Joaquin Valley on species, natural communities and open space.
- Objective 5: Protect existing and identified potential recreational and cultural resource areas in close proximity to current and proposed urban centers to enable appropriate entities (including local, state and federal agencies and conservancies) to enhance recreational opportunities for future residents by minimizing travel distances and facilitating frequent enjoyment of recreation areas.
- Objective 6: Provide funding assistance for collaborative private sector and public conservation planning and implementation programs designed to provide long-term protection and management of a coordinated open space system for the San Joaquin Valley.
- Objective 7: Encourage greater participation by the public and landowners in efforts to protect and restore sensitive natural resources and provide for public recreation opportunities consistent with the goals of the Blueprint Plan.
- Objective 8: Encourage local governments to work collaboratively to consider oversight authorities and implementing legislative or regulatory changes or other initiatives that would facilitate achieving the goals and purposes of the Blueprint.

**c. GUIDELINES DESIGNED TO PROTECT HIGH VALUE OPEN SPACE AND
CONTRIBUTE TO RE-ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE**

To address the identified Blueprint objectives, the following guidelines are proposed for consideration and implementation by local governments, regional/state/federal agencies, district organizations, landowners and other organizations responsible for managing sensitive natural lands within the San Joaquin Valley Partnership study area. The proposed guidelines are organized and presented in a manner that addresses each of the objectives outlined in the preceding discussion.

Implementation of the proposed guidelines will require more extensive public/private collaboration than has been experienced historically. It will require the participation of local governments, public agencies (including state/federal agencies with regulatory responsibilities),

landowners, water districts and non-profit organizations. In addition, private/public collaborative efforts should be accompanied by educational initiatives aimed both at landowners and the general public to increase awareness of the importance of natural resources within the study area and what could be done to protect these resources. As noted earlier, the following guidelines are not binding policies or regulations. It is hoped that agencies/organizations responsible for protecting and managing sensitive open space would consider relevant guidelines for inclusion as part of their planning and implementation programs.

Guidelines for Protecting Natural Communities and Biological Diversity

- A1. Encourage and coordinate future planning at the local jurisdiction level in a manner that will contribute to maintaining biological diversity and natural communities within the region.
- A2. Encourage protection of areas supporting natural communities with documented occurrences of state/federal listed species and “species at risk” identified in the draft California Wildlife Action Plan and of sufficient size to sustain those processes likely to support such species.
- A3. Focus natural lands protection efforts on those natural communities that have been identified as “under-protected” by the CDFG California Wildlife Action Plan because less than 20 percent of the remaining communities are contained within public or otherwise permanently protected lands. Examples of such natural communities include:
 - Vernal Pools;
 - Great Valley Cottonwood Riparian Forest;
 - Great Valley Oak Riparian Forest;
 - Valley Oak Woodland;
 - Blue Oak Woodland;
 - California Walnut Woodland;
 - Valley sink scrub; and
 - Great Valley Mesquite Scrub.
- A4. Identify and encourage protection of intact natural landscapes in rim areas below the 2500’ elevation surrounding the Valley floor because of overall contributions to biodiversity, including blue oak savanna/woodlands, grassland complexes, sycamore alluvial areas and areas with concentrations of listed species.
- A5. Selective protection of other natural lands located within “rim” areas surrounding the Valley floor should be encouraged with a focus on maintaining linkages between protected natural communities in the rim area and between the rim and valley floor natural communities.
- A6. Plan for proportional representation among natural communities using the appropriate USFS eco-sections and seek to maintain and/or re-establish at least 20 percent of their historic extent.

- A7. Identify natural areas that are sufficiently large and diverse to be protected and managed over the long term to conserve identified functions and values.
- A8. Identify and protect sensitive natural lands within the SJV by focusing on natural communities and systems that provide multiple species and habitat values rather than focusing on individual species.
- A9. Encourage the formulation of adaptive management programs for protected natural lands to enhance the conservation of species and protection of protected open space functions and values over the long term.
- A10. Encourage protection of biologically-sensitive natural lands in a manner that recognizes the local, regional or larger geographic, aesthetic, economic and social benefits related to the protected open space functions and values.
- A11. Encourage water districts to manage surface flows and ground water resources in a manner that will provide for adequate and dependable water quantity and quality to maintain the natural functions and values of future high value open space areas.

Guidelines for Creating a Well-Connected and Integrated Open Space System

- B1. Encourage local governments and other agencies to work cooperatively to identify high value open space areas as part of an eight-county open space system capable of providing “environmental infrastructure” benefiting residents and visitors throughout the Blueprint study area over the long term.
- B2. Avoid creating biological “sink areas” that serve to attract species (*e.g.*, mountain lions or tule elk) to areas that do not provide adequate connectivity and/or size and, therefore, cannot be effectively managed to preserve desired natural functions and values over the long term.
- B3. Encourage protection and re-establishment of river and riparian corridors and related natural communities to maintain the historic linkages between the valley floor wetlands and between the riparian areas and the higher elevation rim areas.
- B4. Encourage protection and, where feasible, restoration of upland linkages among already-protected areas, including:
 - linkages among protected areas of the Grasslands Ecological Area in Merced County;
 - in the Tulare Basin among the Kern and Pixley National Wildlife Refuges, the northern Semitropic Ridge and the western foothills;
 - linkages along the western edge of the study area, including the Carrizo Plain National Monument and the Lokern Natural Area northward to the Panoche Hills and foothills of the Diablo Range near Tracy; and

- linkages connecting protected public lands and conservation easements in the Sierra foothills.
- B5. Identify wildlife corridors and habitat linkages capable of protecting identified functions and values that would serve multiple species and habitat functions and consider these corridors/linkages for permanent protection via acquisition of conservation easements, fee acquisition or through management agreements.
- B6. Identify and incorporate ancillary habitat and biological connectivity values presented by species and habitat within agricultural areas and in conjunction with water management practices by developing “overlays” that serve to incorporate such areas as part of an open space system and mitigate potential impacts.
- B7. Around sensitive biological resource areas encourage creation of buffers that incorporate compatible and/or beneficial uses (*e.g.*, agricultural activities and grazing) capable of contributing to conservation of grassland, vernal pools and other wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. As an example, in western Merced County on lands surrounding the Grasslands Ecological Area suggests that beneficial resource uses (selected agricultural activities, including grazing) occur within 1 mile and neutral resource uses (other agricultural and related uses) occur within 1-2 miles, depending on the characteristics of the areas to be protected.
- B8. For urban interface areas on the periphery of existing and future urban areas, encourage the protection and management of existing natural lands as buffers providing separation between sensitive biological resources and urban uses.
- B9. Encourage formulation of natural lands/open space planning models and ordinances that encourage the preservation of long-term greenbelts surrounding urban areas and other areas designated as future urban areas.

Guidelines for Identifying Restoration and Mitigation Areas

- C1. Encourage local governments and state/federal agencies to cooperate in identifying lands containing degraded wetlands, riparian, native grasslands and other natural communities that exhibit a high potential for restoration.
- C2. Encourage public and private landowners and non-profit organizations to work collaboratively to acquire development rights/fee title to enable restoration and management programs to be carried out on high value privately-owned lands.
- C3. Encourage identification of public agencies or non-profit organizations with appropriate expertise and the ability to accept conservation easements or fee title of mitigation lands to provide for long-term management of restored lands.

- C4. Local governments, state and federal agencies should work cooperatively to designate one or more large sites with significant restoration potential within the eight-county study area to:
- improve coordination and effectiveness of restoration efforts within the study area;
 - further the creation of a coordinated open space system that would achieve the Blueprint Plan objectives and guidelines;
 - serve as an incentive to landowners, agencies and conservation groups seeking restoration and/or mitigation opportunities;
 - provide incentives for smaller landowners/project proponents to effectively mitigate project impacts as part of the coordinated open space system;
 - increase support for funding mitigation banking efforts; and
 - assure that funds collected as in lieu payment for restoration activities can be applied expeditiously and effectively to restoration of biological resources with demonstrated functions and values.

Guidelines for Protecting Flood Plains

- D1. Initiate discussions among public agencies and local governments designed to encourage creation of financial/regulatory incentives capable of improving flood plain preservation and management.
- D2. Encourage local government and agencies/districts responsible for flood control to protect lands within the 100-year flood plain and minimize new urban/infrastructure uses that would require protection.
- D3. Encourage consideration and mapping of the potential effects of anticipated regional climate change on the seasonality (likely shift from spring peaks to winter peaks due to reduced snow pack buildup) and intensity (likely increase in the range/intensity of peak flows) of runoff as part of future development decisions in and adjacent to existing designated 100-year flood plains.
- D4. Within the Delta portions of the study area, encourage consideration of the cumulative effects of subsidence, sea level rise (in response to global climate change) and regional climate change on flood plain land uses, long-term protection/maintenance of levees and land use decisions in areas requiring levee protection.

Guidelines for Identifying and Protecting Significant Recreation Opportunities

- E1. Encourage identification of areas suitable for future open space and recreation opportunities, particularly open space within or close to urban areas to contribute to improving recreational access and the quality of life for residents by minimizing the need for long distance travel to recreation opportunities.

- E2. Encourage protection and potential expansion of existing recreational/cultural lands and other areas designated as important recreational or cultural resources by local, state or federal agencies.
- E3. Encourage future recreational planning within the study area to address the recommendations contained in the California State Parks' Central Valley Vision by:
- emphasizing protection and acquisition of recreation access to river and riparian areas;
 - planning for future recreational needs in a manner that reflects changing demographics within the study area;
 - providing for protection and interpretation of significant cultural and natural resources; and
 - encouraging the creation of group day use areas, camping and off road vehicle facilities in appropriate areas.
- E3. Encourage site-specific protection for important recreational and cultural resources including the
- Tombstone formations SR 140 and Rock Hills area east of Exeter for educational and scenic resources;
 - Central Valley mounds as cultural resources; and
 - Buffering the Allensworth State Park to protect the surrounding cultural landscape. Work closely with the Ancient Valley Planning Group.
- E4. Encourage protection of selected rim lands on the east side of the valley up to the 2500'-3500' elevation contour (the study area boundary) for their recreation, open space and water quality and quantity and to recognize that natural communities that may not appear to be threatened now represent important constituent elements of the natural landscape.
- E5. Encourage protection of areas adjacent to or in proximity to existing parklands which could contribute unique natural features, concentrations of species at risk or rare habitat types that would complement resources at the existing park.

Guidelines for Funding Open Space and Conservation Planning, Monitoring and Management

- F1. Federal and state agencies should provide greater staff and financial resources and coordinate efforts to conserve natural communities and riparian/wetland resources through Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).
- F2. The Department of Fish and Game and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service should encourage local governments to consider entering into agreements to prepare HCPs and NCCPs capable of addressing multiple species and habitats on a subregional or regional basis.

- F3. Federal and state agencies should increase available funding and technical support for monitoring of existing and future natural lands, including:
- Vernal pool complexes on the east side in Merced, Stanislaus, Fresno and Madera counties;
 - Saltbush scrub complexes on the Valley floor in the Allensworth/Kern/Semi Tropic ridge and the Lo-Kern/Buena Vista Lake/NPR 1 and 2 areas; and
 - The ancestral lake beds, including Tulare, Buena Vista and Goose lakes.
- F4. State and federal resource agencies should work collaboratively with local governments, conservation interests, universities/colleges and landowners to:
- support the collection, preparation and management of resource databases for the study area;
 - seek alternative funding sources and approaches; and
 - make the database(s) more accessible to the public, landowners and local governments.
- F5. To support preparation and management of vegetation and species databases for the 8-county study area, apply bond monies as qualifying “capital” outlays and seek alternative funding approaches (*e.g.*, through programs such as the Energy Commission co-generation facilities studies that mapped habitat for semi-tropical migratory birds by quarter-section).
- F6. Identify appropriate public agencies, land trusts, conservancies or other qualified entities willing and able to take title to land/easements and manage such lands and easements that may be proposed for permanent protection (see also guideline C3 above)
- F7. At the local government level, consider the use of “benefit fees” or other approaches to provide funding for acquisition of development rights from willing sellers of private lands (*i.e.*, conservation easements, fee title or other long-term agreements) for preservation and management of high value open space that would contribute to achieving Blueprint objectives and guidelines. For instance, a one-time “benefit fee” could include be generated by the first sale of a residential dwelling and collected during close of escrow for payment to a local or regional open space account.

Guidelines for Encouraging Landowner and Public Participation in Open Space Protection and Management

- G1. Provide education programs for citizens and landowners that explain the value of local sensitive resources and natural processes.
- G2. Encourage schools to use local natural lands as laboratories for science and related curricula.

- G3. Encourage formulation and dissemination of “Best Management Practices” (BMPs) that are available to landowners and local districts to protect and enhance natural lands.
- G4. Encourage formulation of an educational program directed at the public, landowners and agencies within the Blueprint study area that explains the importance of conserving high value open space to the quality of life of all Valley residents.
- G5. Encourage local government, corporate and educational institutions to provide public recognition for landowners that elect to foster open space protection and conservation measures through BMPs, land set asides, adaptive management and educational programs.

Guidelines for Identifying Needed Oversight, Legislative or Regulatory Changes

- H1. Encourage local governments to work collaboratively to consider the creation of a regional public open space authority (*e.g.*, a “Regional Council”) to provide oversight and assistance to local efforts to preserve and management high value open space areas and be empowered to receive lands and funding.
- H2. Local governments should consider the creation of voluntary regional financing mechanisms (see guideline F7, above), to generate funding for long-term open space preservation and management.
- H3. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service should consider extending the “Safe Harbor” protections to privately-owned open space that is voluntarily offered for inclusion by a landowner as part of a coordinated open space system that provides regional benefits.

d. CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES DIAGRAM

Purpose of the Diagram

To contribute effectively to a sustainable landscape for the San Joaquin Valley, high value conservation opportunities should be identified throughout the Blueprint study area. Once identified, the potential to protect these high value areas should be evaluated to formulate options that could be formulated as part of a planning and decision-making process for the Blueprint study area. The overall coordinated planning process is addressed elsewhere in the Blueprint Plan. When in place, it would enable decision-makers to address the housing, employment, transportation, schools, health services, air quality, water quality and supply and other commitments that will be needed to adequately address the needs and quality of life (*e.g.*, for housing, employment, transportation, air and water quality, human services, etc.)for the 4 million new residents that are expected to live in the Valley by the year 2050. The range of coordinated

planning and implementation commitments that would be involved in addition to open space and conservation are discussed in other sections of the Draft Blueprint.

Description of Potential High Value Open Space and Conservation Opportunities

The “Potential Opportunities” diagram (Figure 2) illustrates one interpretation of biological and natural resource data compiled for the Blueprint study area. provides an illustration of one of several potential sets of criteria and weighting systems that could be used to identify constituent biological and natural process elements for purposes of creating a coordinated open space system within the study area. The criteria used were developed by the Center for Information and the Environment (ICE) at U. C. Davis after consultation with a range of agency, academic and non-profit environmental organization representatives as part of the Blueprint process (see a following discussion of persons consulted). For simplicity and clarity, the Potential Opportunities diagram (Figure 2) illustrates only open space/conservation values and does not attempt to map recreation and cultural resources that are cited in the guidelines. However, some cultural and recreational opportunities are located within the potential high value open space/conservation opportunities polygons in Figure 2.

Constituent biological and process components depicted in Figure 2 would contribute significantly to protection of remaining natural communities and maintenance of biological diversity within the study area. The illustrative open space components include representative areas addressing the following priorities:

- Natural communities that are considered under-protected within the Valley because less than 20 percent of the remaining communities are contained within public lands and, therefore, subject to long-term protection;
- Riparian areas that, in addition to supporting habitat for state/federal listed species and other sensitive species, provide essential biological linkages between important blocks of natural lands;
- Significant wetlands and open water areas that provide an array of biological benefits;
- Areas containing degraded or historic natural values (*e.g.*, historic lakebeds, wetlands, native grasslands, etc.) that could be enhanced and/or restored as part of offsetting mitigation for development impacts related to needed economic development within the Valley;
- Areas in the Valley floor or along the rim that contain documented concentrations of threatened or endangered species; and
- Areas providing habitat linkages and wildlife corridors capable of effectively linking remaining blocks of natural lands as part of a Valley-wide open space system.

Information Used to Prepare the Diagram

The constituent components included within the potential polygons and represented by connectivity arrows represent the ICE interpretation of information contained in several studies and reports prepared by governmental agencies, environmental organizations and conservancies.

To identify the high value conservation opportunities illustrated in Figure 2, a number of sources were used, including but not limited to:

- The GIS database compiled by the U. C. Davis Information Center for the Environment (ICE);
- The Draft California Wildlife Action Plan and communications from Department of Fish and Game staff and staff of the Resources Agency;
- State Department of Parks and Recreation's "Acquisition Guidelines for Natural Areas" and "Central Valley Vision" reports, and communications from Department staff;
- The CNDDDB Database prepared and maintained by the Department of Fish and Game and other communications from Department staff;
- The Central Valley Joint Venture Project;
- Information provided by the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners, a non-profit organization;
- Information provided by the Grasslands Water District; and
- Data and personal communications provided by representatives of the Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and Sierra Club.

Based on these comments and GIS data, the ICE staff created GIS datasets to display priorities, and combined the datasets to identify the areas where the priorities exhibited the greatest geographic overlap. Figure 3 provides a summary of 13 conservation priorities cited by knowledgeable individuals. Each of the 13 priority categories is related to the 24 designated High Value Conservation Opportunities resulting from this evaluation approach. Geographic areas within the Blueprint study area that addressed high densities of overlapping priority citations were shown as polygons and designated "High Value Conservation Opportunity" areas. A connectivity analysis was then conducted in order to discern potential linkages between these "Conservation Opportunities" that would facilitate ecological flow. The connectivity analysis applied a GIS tool called the "Universal Model Builder" to identify, combine and weight several variables:

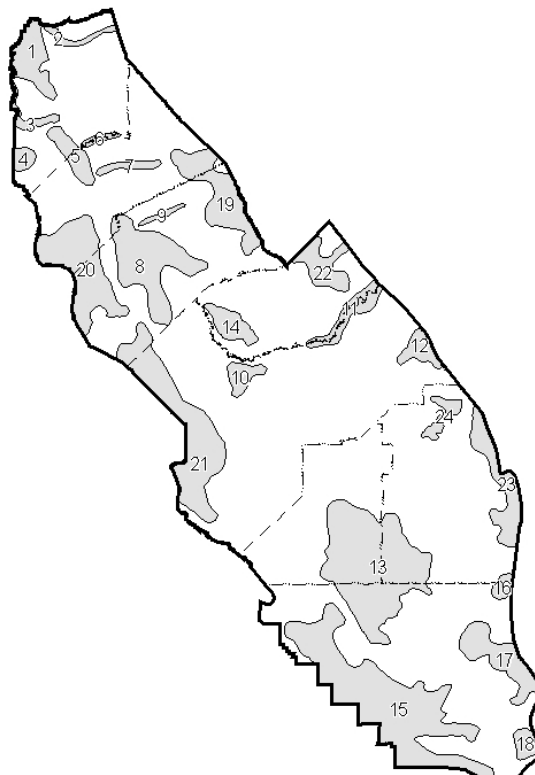
- existing vegetation type,
- natural area density (within 3 km),
- urban area density (within 5 km),
- road density, waterway density, and
- land management status (public/conservation vs. private).

This connectivity analysis produced a "surface" or layer that identified potential connectivity areas on the landscape ranging from low to high potential connectivity and enabled the GIS team to designate potential connectivity corridors capable of linking the "High Value Conservation Opportunity" areas. The final result, as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 3

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Conservation Area														
1 - Delta														
2 - Mokelumne River														
3 - Old River														
4 - Corral Hollow														
5 - Lower San Joaquin River														
6 - Stanislaus River														
7 - Tuolumne River														
8 - Grasslands EA														
9 - Merced River														
10 - Fresno Slough														
11 - Upper San Joaquin River														
12 - Upper Kings River														
13 - KKT														
14 - West Madera														
15 - Western Kern Hills														
16 - Grizzly Gulch														
17 - NE Bakersfield														
18 - Tejon Hills														
19 - East Merced Vernal Pool														
20 - Greater Henry Coe														
21 - Ciervo Hills														
22 - Upper Fresno River														
23 - Sequoia Foothills														
24 - Stokes Mountain														

- A – Floodplain
- B – Merced/Stanslaus vernal pools
- C – Saltbrush scrub
- D – Lake bed
- E – Blue oak
- F – Kit fox
- G – Grassland
- H – High CNDDDB species density
- I – Riparian corridors
- J – Sensitive communities
- K – Tehachapi corridor
- L – Grasslands Ecological Area
- M – Conservation area buffers
- N – TLBP project areas



Limits on Application of the Diagram to Specific Locations and Properties

The reader should exercise caution in interpreting Figure 2 and applying it to specific properties or even specific areas. This diagram provides one representation of a coordinated open space system that could be created; however, it should be used and interpreted with an understanding of several key factors.

First, the ICE staff prepared the Diagram using a set of criteria and weighting approaches that resulted in the designation of the “opportunities” polygons shown in green in Figure 2. By selecting different criteria or weighting the criteria in other ways, a different distribution of opportunity polygons and different set of connectivity could have resulted. So, Figure 2 represents one of several potential opportunity summaries.

Second, because we are attempting to identify potential opportunities, the areal extent of each or any of the polygons tends to be overstated in terms of what is needed to achieve the objectives and be consistent with the guidelines set forth herein. Inclusion of an area in a polygon does not imply that its preservation and management is necessary.

Third, it is not accurate to conclude that any area not shown within an opportunity polygon should be considered automatically developable. Specific regulatory requirements such as requirements relating to federal or state wetland permitting, endangered species permitting or other permitting programs would apply independently Figure 2 and could dictate future use of the properties.

Fourth, because not all of the lands designated in the Figure 2 opportunity polygons are needed, these polygons offer alternatives both within each polygon and in terms of use of other polygons to achieve objectives set forth in the Blueprint draft.

Finally, the Blueprint process is based on mutual agreement among participants – it is a voluntary process. With this voluntary character of the Blueprint process in mind, and consistent with both state and federal practices, acquisition of fee title, conservation easements or other interests on private lands included with potential opportunity polygons would only occur in cases where the landowner is a willing seller or participant.

e. PERSONS CONSULTED DURING REPORT PREPARATION

The draft report was prepared by Rod Meade, serving as the Consultant to the Great Valley Center and the Land Use/Housing/Agriculture Work Group of the Partnership. Mr. Meade is President of R. J. Meade, Consulting, Inc., a firm he founded in 1980 to consult on public planning and policy issues.

Technical and GIS information included in this report was provided under the leadership of Mike McCoy, Co-Director of the U. C. Davis Center for the Environment. Dr. McCoy was assisted by other staff of the ICE, including: Dr. Jim Quinn, Co-Director; Patrick Huber, Karen Beardsley and Nathaniel Roth.

Two meetings to discuss the approach to protecting high value open space in the San Joaquin Valley as part of this effort were convened at the U. C. Davis ICE offices, one on April 27 and a second on July 19 of 2006. The following individuals participated in these meetings and/or submitted written or oral comments addressing draft documents that had been distributed for review and comment:

Steve Johnson, Mike Eaton and Ramona Swanson - The Nature Conservancy;
Glenn Olson -the National Audubon Society;
Ken Ryan - the Sierra Club;
Osha Meserve - for the Grasslands Water District;
Carol Combs and Rob Hansen - the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners;
Jay Chamberlin - the Resources Agency;
Rick Rayburn and Wayne Woodroff - State Department of Parks and Recreation; Nina
Gordon - State Department of Parks and Recreation.
Dr. Jeff Single - State Department of Fish and Game;
Lurene Stetson - the Great Places Program and Department of Conservation; and
Erin Foresman - U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Attachment B: San Joaquin Valley Affordable Communities Initiative In concert with the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley and America's Affordable Communities Initiative of HUD

By Rollie Smith, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Background: Under the designation of the San Joaquin Valley Affordable Communities Initiative, over two hundred stakeholders—builders, developers, lenders, realtors, employers, building trade union members, homebuyers, environmentalists, housing counselors, jurisdiction housing planners, housing authority officials, and housing advocates from congregations, neighborhood associations, and legal service organizations—were interviewed personally. Seven focus groups were conducted. In addition, best practices in and tools for affordable housing were researched. Based on this information, two planning sessions developed the beginnings of a regional strategy to achieve the following agreed upon vision.

Vision: *Safe, accessible, inclusive, and healthy communities that provide a variety of housing types affordable to Valley residents and working people, increasing opportunities for homeownership and preserving natural resources.*

Strategic Elements: Three elements of a comprehensive housing strategy for Valley residents and workforce were identified:

1. Link housing policies with land use and transportation policies. Be forward thinking and deliberate about where to concentrate growth in population.
 - Adopt a conceptual plan for the Valley that identifies where populations will and will not be encouraged to grow. Focus growth into large cities with high-density land use and public transportation corridors to those cities. Incorporate infrastructure (water/transportation/ energy) needs into this plan.
 - Conduct all economic and environmental studies; prepare detailed reports and engage in the public hearing processes as early as possible in the development stage, thus achieving maximum front end planning and reducing costs.
2. Link housing policies with Jobs, Economic Development, and Workforce
 - Focus on bringing housing affordable to the workforce closer to the work site by facilitating adoption of mixed-use ordinances.
 - Urge and support employer assisted housing; housing as an employee benefit along with financial education, individual development accounts, and housing counseling.
 - Include job creation and workforce development within plans for housing development.
 - Develop a separate but integrated regional strategy for special needs populations such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, group housing, and ADA compliant universal design; e.g. the ten year plan to end chronic homelessness.

3. Be Comprehensive and Regional in Scope

- Provide incentives and subsidies for mixed-income housing opportunities in all large developments through local commitment and planning, through partnerships with affordable housing developers, and through a special regional affordable housing fund.
- Mitigate costs (labor, land, material, time) especially through streamlining regulatory and permitting processes; through special affordable housing funds to purchase and set aside land, through the organization of purchasing coops, and through fair community wage agreements reflecting the wages of the local area, and creative use of excess public land.
- Combine Density, Design, and Diversity through planned communities of scale within cities.
- Encourage green transit-oriented housing by demonstrating its cost effectiveness and by training jurisdictions, affordable housing developers, and housing authorities. Organize a regional energy office for this purpose as well as to promote general energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, and the promotion of a clean energy industry.

Recommendations for the California Partnership and the State of California:

- 1) Establish a multi-million dollar regional SJV affordable Housing Trust as a dedicated stream of flexible seed funding for affordable housing. The initial financial support for the Trust will be from State and Federal governments, progressive private foundations and lending institutions. It will maintain itself through matching funds from participating cities and counties and return on loans for affordable housing projects.
- 2) Create a regional organization, commission, and/or collaborative with expertise to administer the fund and to promote, guide, and assist affordable community planning and development. Set guidelines and criteria for organization and fund.
- 3) Support projects, at least one in each county by the end of 2007, that demonstrate the three strategic elements above by seeking out innovative developers, providing incentives to jurisdictions, and facilitating entrepreneurial partnerships.
- 4) Develop summary reports for County COGs; engage local jurisdictions through COGs, provide ongoing training and consultation to local jurisdictions and their partners through COGs utilizing the Regional Blueprint process. Maintain a tool box of resources for affordable housing and demonstrate the best practices that cities are using to provide housing to all their residents and workforce.
- 5) Facilitate development of a regional education/outreach campaign that promotes the benefits of higher density, mixed use, public transportation oriented communities.

Recommendations to Cities, Counties, Associations of Governments working with a regional housing organization supported by State and Federal governments:

- 1) Maintain a dedicated stream of flexible seed funding for affordable housing through the regional Housing Trust. These funds could be used for land acquisition and land trusts, pre-construction costs, buying down interest rates, silent seconds, acquisition of existing rental units to maintain affordability, revolving loan funds, affordable housing bonuses to developers, etc. Suggested sources for such funding: real estate transfer tax, general fund, sales tax, liquidation of excess public lands within a development agreement.
- 2) Produce an inventory of REO property; and a careful analysis of it to distinguish those lands which might truly be considered excess, with the goal of developing mixed use, master planned communities that incorporate affordable/multi-family/medium to high density housing towards affordability.
- 3) Reform all regulations that create obstacles to affordable housing. Reduce impact fees for affordable housing; change zoning ordinances to allow mixed-use housing and higher densities; reduce the number of public hearings and environmental studies and reports through front-end planning.
- 4) Adopt energy efficiency policies and practices to move all housing, new construction and rehabilitated, to approach zero energy costs thus making utility savings a major tool for affordability.
- 5) Assemble partnerships for demonstration projects of large scale, master planned, mixed income and mixed-use elements, with high density, attractive comprehensive community design, and maximum diversity. Consider high-density housing design competitions in relationship to a specific property. Increase capacity of affordable housing developers to partner with market housing developers.
- 6) Collaborate with developers to create large-scale projects with a mix of housing for working families, while avoiding policies and fees which increase the cost of for sale housing generally. Plan for communities which meet the needs of a broader population, economically, ethnically, and age.
- 7) Encourage maximum density. Insist on minimum density. Promote mixed density strategies. Encourage that all development be contiguous. Participate in public outreach and education to promote urban living as a desirable way of life.
- 8) Work with large employers, lenders, and housing counseling agencies to develop employee assistance programs for financial education, banking, credit, housing counseling, and homeownership. Establish local housing resource centers for home seekers, employers, and labor organizations. Develop community-based attainable housing resources as part of municipal and county web sites.

- 9) Support planning and housing staff, council and community leadership to continually learn about latest efforts in affordable and green housing through training programs, conferences, and tours.
- 10) Provide access and coordination for citizen volunteers to participate in community-based housing initiatives. Hold public forum on specific community housing needs and goals. Coordinate community agencies and non-profit groups in aspects of housing needs. Organize workshops for city councils to learn approaches and set goals for making their cities affordable, green safe, and healthy using the above recommendations.